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In the wake of riders' complaints, Metra Chairman Jeffrey Ladd has directed agency staff to review ridership data on the North Central Service line over the next three months to see if new schedules can be tweaked to better meet commuters' needs.

Separately, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) enlisted the help of U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert of Plano on Thursday to pressure Canadian National Railway to allow express service on the Metra route, which runs between Union Station and Antioch.

The efforts came on the same day that Metra held a ceremony in Wheeling to celebrate expanded service that begins Monday on the 55-mile line. That day, the number of passenger trains will double to 20, including morning outbound trains to Antioch and afternoon inbound trains to Chicago to help reverse commuters.

Four new stations will be added and a fifth will come in Cicero this summer, officials said.

The expanded service is thanks to a \$218 million project that, among other things, added 16.3 miles of track on the route.

But some riders don't think the project has lived up to Metra's billing, noting that they originally promised 22 trains and that the only express run is a 7:02 p.m. train from Antioch. They also say the additional stations make their travel times longer, the new schedules have condensed the window of peak-hour trains and reverse-commute trains need to be better timed.

Kirk called Hastert on Thursday to see if he would help him pressure Canadian National, which owns the tracks, to allow express trains on the route.

"I just raised the issue with him and said we want to work with you to work with the Canadian National and he said, `OK'" Kirk said.

A Hastert spokesman confirmed that Kirk had called and said Hastert will review it.

But Ladd, the Metra chairman, said adding express trains would be difficult because freight traffic on the route is at an all-time high.

"I don't think it's possible at this point in time," he said.

Still, Buffalo Grove Trustee Jeffrey Berman, a regular North Central commuter and outspoken critic of the new schedules, said the efforts are a step in the right direction.

But, he added, "the proof is in the pudding."